

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 PA-02 PRS-01

USIA-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /060 W

-----013049 120109Z /66

P 112250Z JUL 77

FM AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3602

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS VANCOUVER 0655

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV, CA

SUBJECT: REACTIONS TO NATIONAL UNITY DEBATE

REF: A. OTTAWA 5944; B.VANCOUVER 578

1. OF VANCOUVER'S TWO MAJOR NEWSPAPERS, THE PROVINCE HAS BEEN THE MOST CRITICAL OF PM TRUDEAU'S STANCE IN LAST WEEK'S NATIONAL UNITY DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT. EDITORIAL OF JULY 6 STATES ROBARTS-PEPIN UNITY STUDY GROUP WILL PROBABLY FIND THAT OF THE PARTY LEADERS SPEAKING IN THE DEBATE "MR. TRUDEAU MADE THE LEAST SENSE" AND "OPPOSITION LEADER JOE CLARK AND NDP LEADER ED BROADBENT WERE CLOSER TO THE TRUTH." PROVINCE AGREES WITH CLARK THAT "BILINGUALISM WILL NOT HOLD THE COUNTRY TOGETHER" AND THAT FEDERAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, REGIONAL DISPARITIES, UNEMPLOYMENT AND WESTERN ALIENATION ARE THE PROBLEMS. "MR. CLARK, QUITE PROPERLY, POINTED OUT THAT MR. TRUDEAU, WHO POSES AS THE GREAT SAVIOUR OF CONFEDERATION, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE PROVINCIAL DISSATISFACTION WITH FEDERALISM." EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT TRUDEAU'S "ADMISSION" THAT CANADIANS WOULD HAVE TO BE CONVINCED THAT FEDERALISM WORKED WELL BEFORE THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO GRANT QUEBEC MORE ACCOMMODATION IS A "TALE" HEARD BEFORE AND "MORE THAN COMMONS SPEECHES" WILL BE NEEDED TO CONVINCE BOTH MARITIMERS AND WESTERNERS OF HIS NEWLY-FOUND LOVE FOR THE REGIONS.

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WM PROVINCE EDITORIAL OF JULY 8, WHILE AGREEING WITH TRUDEAU ON THE OVERALL VALUE OF NATIONAL BILINGUALISM, WARNS THAT "BY ATTEMPTING TO MAKE IT THE ONLY ISSUE IN CEMENTING NATIONAL UNITY OR AT LEAST BY CONCENTRATING ON IT TO THE VIRTUAL EXCLUSION OF OTHER ISSUES" HE IS SETTING UP THE COUNTRY, IN STANFIELD'S DESCRIPTION, FOR A BILINGUALISM "SHOOTOUT" WHICH COULD CLAIM CANADA AS THE VICTIM ITSELF.

3. VANCOUVER SUN IS HIGHLY COMPLIMENTARY OF CHOICE OF ROBARTS AND PEPIN TO CO-CHAIR A UNITY STUDY GROUP ("TWO OF THE MOST COMFORTABLE , COOL, COMPETENT GUYS WHO'VE EVER WALKED IN THE BAZAAR OF CANADIAN POLITICS"), BUT STATED IN JULY 8 EDITORIAL THAT THE UNITY DEBATE "MAY PASS BY US HAVING STIRRED LITTLE IN THE AIR BY WAY OF NEW THOUGHT OR MOVED THE COUNTRY'S TWO SOLITUDES NOT ONE JOT OR TITTLE CLOSER TO EACH OTHER'S HEARTS AND MINDS." SUN WAS PARTICULARLY IN AGREEMENT WITH STANFIELD'S AGRUMENT IN THE DEBATE THAT THE LIBERALS ARE "TRYING TO SQUEEZE EVERY DROP OF POLITICAL ADVANTAGE FROM THE NATIONAL UNITY ISSUE" AND STATED THAT A SUGGESTION OF A FALL ELECTION "IS PURE MISCHIEF." "THE GOVERNMENT HAS A MANDATE NOW -- A MANDATE TO 1979 -- TO GOVERN. IT SHOULD."

4. COPIES OF EDITORIALS BEING MAILED TO EMBASSY AND EUR/CAN.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, DEBATES, NATIONALISM, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977VANCOU00655
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770246-0889
Format: TEL
From: VANCOUVER
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770769/aaaaciiv.tel
Line Count: 79
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a2bb676d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 OTTAWA 5944, 77 VANCOUVER 578
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1896455
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTIONS TO NATIONAL UNITY DEBATE
TAGS: PGOV, SOPN, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a2bb676d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009